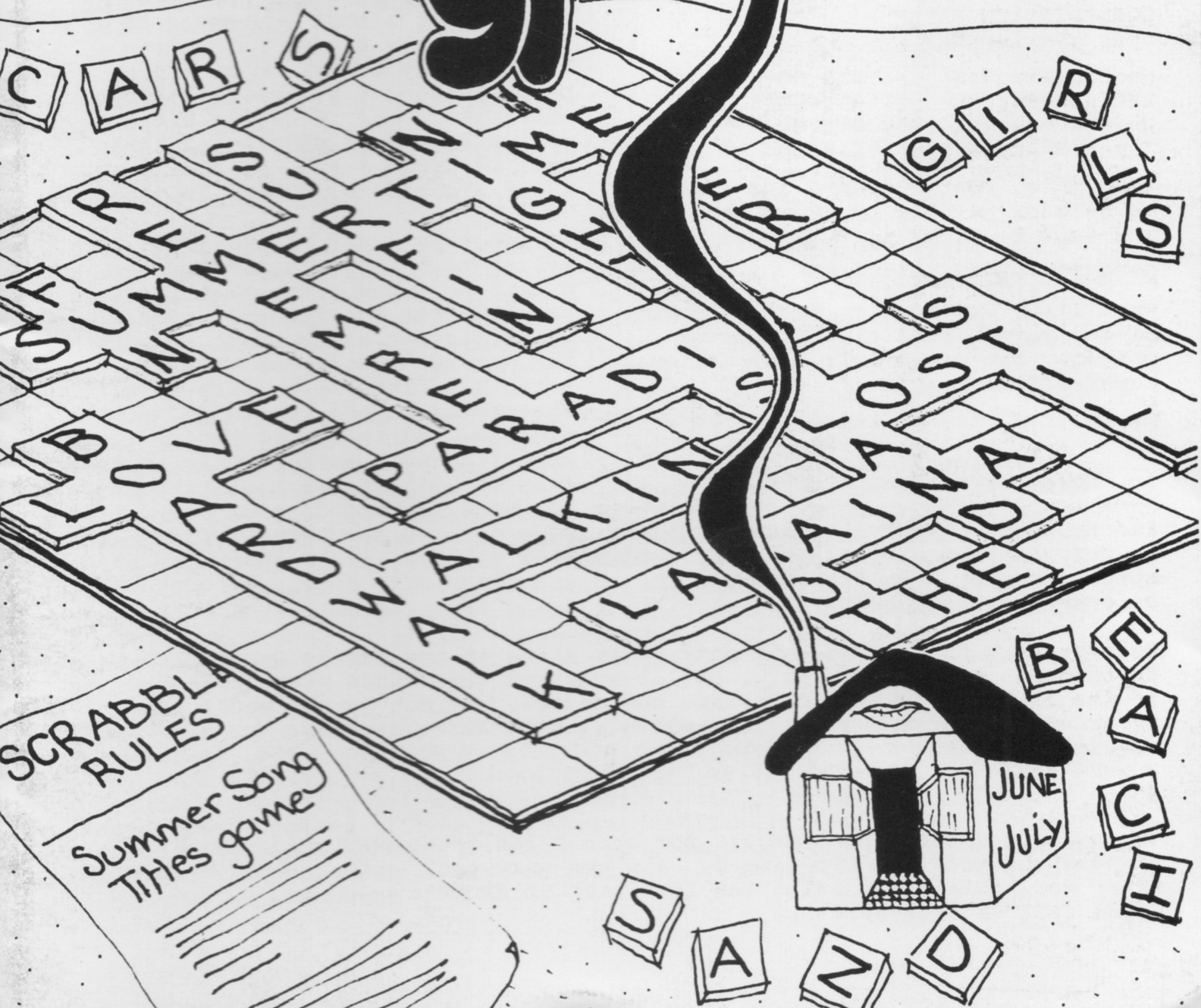


# Back Bay Story



## BEACH BOYS STOMP - JUNE '92

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and Bruce's ecologically-aware concept seems to have been gently laid to rest somewhere along the line. SUMMER IN PARADISE would appear to have more in common with ALL SUMMER LONG and STILL CRUISIN' than, say SUNFLOWER or even THE BEACH BOYS.

Does it really matter at this late, late stage in the band's career? Truthfully, no, not really... but it would've been kinda nice if it had. If the band were prepared to take one gamble, why not go the whole ten yards and go for one final worthwhile album? Formula sells, but art survives.

### AGD

Three extra special birthdays: for both Brian (June 20th) and Bruce (June 27th) it's the big five-0. All the very best, guys. And, believe it or not, this issue marks the 15th year of STOMP's publication. Words fail us (for once...).

## EDITORIAL

The announcement of any forthcoming Beach Boys project during the last 25 years or so has inevitably prompted two (not unconnected) questions: how much did Brian contribute and is the whole thing any good? The proposed new album for 1992, SUMMER IN PARADISE adds a further query - will we ever hear the damn thing (legally)? Wonderful as it is that the band have taken the plunge and recorded their first wholly-new album in some seven years, the current absence of a recording contract must be a slight cause for concern, although it can - and has - been argued that a band possessed of the mentality of the Beach Boys would hardly embark on such a project without at least putting out feelers and receiving a tacit nod, and current opinion is that Capitol could issue, or at the very least distribute, SUMMER IN PARADISE.

So, we have a new album... but to return to the original brace of questions - and given that we're working from nothing more than a track listing and current reports - the answers would seem to be that Brian has taken absolutely no part whatsoever in the recording process, and that song titles appear to hold more promise to the fans of 1961-64 era music than for the more 'artistic' acolytes...

### Track Listing:

1. Shoot The Curl
2. Surfin' Down The Swanee River
3. Raindrops (previously unreleased)
4. From Jimmy With Tears
5. Pray For Surf
6. (Oly Oxen Free Free Free) Hide Go Seek
7. The One You Can't Have
8. He's A Doll
9. The Love Of A Boy And Girl
10. Come To Me (previously unreleased)
11. Tonight You Belong To Me
12. (Goodnight My Love) Pleasant Dreams
13. Had To Phone Ya
14. Slip On Through
15. It's Like Heaven
16. Don't Be Cruel
17. Do Ya
18. Sweet Sunday Kinda Love
19. She's Just Out To Get You
20. Romeo & Juliet

It's taken a long while for this collection to materialize, but justice has finally been served to Marilyn Wilson, Diane Rovell and Ginger Blake - The Honeys, as Capitol records in the U.S. has just released THE HONEYS as a new collection in their Capitol collector's series after nearly two years of rumours and delays.

This CD will definitely fill the void in many collections by making all these songs available in one collection, but what has really made the wait for this collection worthwhile is that all 20 tracks are digitally remastered from original 3 and 8-track master session tapes, and many of the tracks, originally appearing in mono, are remixed and presented here for the first time in stereo.

What's more the stereo remastering really makes many of the tracks come alive by further bringing out the 'wall of sound' productions Brian Wilson (and Nick Venet, who produced or co-produced many of the tracks) used to make the best sounding records they could for the Honeys. Examples include "Pray For Surf's" screaming vocal track, the pounding drums on "The One You Can't Have", the 'wall of sound' saxes & xylophone instrumentation given to "From Jimmy With Tears" (which also shows a Country & Western influence) and lastly, all the previously hidden instruments on "He's A Doll" (my personal Honeys' fave) which are finally revealed including guitars, maraccas, casanets, and again those great Brian-produced saxes. The remastering makes many of these tracks sound 'new' to the ears.

Meanwhile, two previously unreleased tracks are included as bonuses. "Raindrops" is a song Nick Venet found and with Jack Nietzsche's arrangement, recorded it with the Honeys in 1963. He and Brian at the same point got into a conflict over who would be the Honeys' producer; and thus "Raindrops" remained in the can. Venet definitely knew about full production as this track's 'wall of sound' indicates, and it also has a great sax break which one can assume was played by Steve Douglas. "Raindrops" might have been a great A-side.

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## REVIEW

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THE HONEYS - CAPITOL COLLECTORS SERIES  
US COMPACT DISC - CDP 7 931932



The second unreleased track is Murry Wilson's "Come To Me". Written by father Wilson, in late 1968 and produced by him for the Honeys, the song is a bit of an embarrassment for the group and reasons are obvious as to why it stayed in the can. Nevertheless it's not a complete throwaway as the vocals the Honeys recorded are fantastic and really deem it good enough to be included in this collection. Most fans will see what I mean when they hear it.

This does bring up the question of why many other Honeys tracks were not included. Perhaps unreleased tracks included on the bootleg "The Definitive Collection" (BBC Vol. 1) were not considered due to being either demos or not completely finished. Still, as many collectors would agree, it would be nice to have some official CD releases of songs like "Three Surfer Boys" and the like.

Another minor problem with this collection stems from the inclusion of eight of the nine tracks from the IT'S LIKE HEAVEN album released in Sweden a few years ago. Two songs from the eight included on this collection are bonus tracks on the previously released SPRING CD in the States by Rhino, "It's Like Heaven" and "Had To Phone Ya". It seems obvious enough that most people who bought either CD would be inclined to buy the other. Thus, those two songs may have been omitted from this collection and others, including "Snowflakes" (the one track missing from the IT'S LIKE HEAVEN LP) could have been included instead. Perhaps the compilers wanted this collection to be "definitive", and in that case, the tracks chosen are understandable.

Nevertheless, the CD is a worthwhile effort. The booklet includes interesting liner notes and many new Honeys photos. More so, the CD again proves that Brian Wilson was a superb producer and the proof's in how fresh these songs still sound today, like many of the earlier Brian-produced Beach Boy songs. Still, it seems a bit odd that none of these songs were ever hits. Perhaps they Honeys will finally have their day! Regardless a definite Five Star Rating!

#### PANAYIOTIS

### THE HONEYS A CAPITAL COLLECTION

No compilation - due to the very nature of the beast and of the consumer - can ever be perfect... but this latest release in the Capitol Collectors series gets as close as it may be possible to get. Having a severely limited back-catalogue to pick from naturally gives the track selection a generous head-start, but the sleeve notes (an incorrect recording date aside) are impeccable, a fitting accompaniment to the music.

Generally, I'm violently opposed to the remixing of material for CD issue, but here Ron Furmanek has undertaken the task with a high degree of sensitivity and regard for the music, and the resulting 'new' stereo versions of the 1960's material are highly satisfying: ever since I first heard "The One You Can't Have", I've longed to clap ear on a good, clean mix (note for new readers: the original 1963 pressing is a dreadful sounding item) and this is such an animal. In fact, all the re-worked '60s tracks show up as essentially new songs and given hindsight, it really is hard to see why at least one of the singles didn't chart.

Of the two completely unreleased cuts, the Murry Wilson composed/arranged/produced "Come To Me" emerges as a pleasant surprise, boasting a distinctly Fifth Dimension-ish feel and a complex yet competent vocal arrangement. By comparison, the Nik Venet produced "Raindrops" (possibly not a completed mix) is at one and the same time raucous and pedestrian, and given that there's ample spare time on the CD, the exclusion of "You Brought It All On", a Brian Wilson production and composition dating from late 1963 and of not-inconsiderable merit, is somewhat surprising...

The later tracks, from "Had To Phone Ya" onwards showcase a simultaneous increase in technique (both studio and vocal) and decrease in, for want of a better phrase, passion, or rather urgency of purpose... recording has perhaps now become a hobby rather than an all consuming way of life. That said, the '70s material is not a jot less enjoyable than that of the '60s, and in "Do Ya" throws up one of those archival archaeology jobs, in that the chorus is lifted from the unreleased BW solo "Marilyn Rovelli" (1976) whilst the verse was lifted for "How's About A Little Bit Of Your Sweet Lovin'?", a 1978 piece of BB fluff.

Throughout, the sound quality is top-notch, even on the solo mono track (why mono? - because, one suspects, that's the way "The Love Of A Boy And Girl" was cut: live and mixed directly down to a mono master) and previously buried subtleties emerge across the stereo sound stage. To the terminal Wilson Watcher, an essential addition to the collection: to anyone less virulently afflicted, or simply a devotee of girl groups and/or good music, a highly recommended collection - and just in time for summer too...

#### AGD

-oOo-

### The Beach Boys - COVERS

#### Jap CD No TOCP 6772

Side 1: Surfin USA; Sloop John B; Barbara Ann; Summertime Blues; Let's Go Trippin'; Why do Fools Fall In Love; Louie, Louie; There's No Other; Graduation Day; A Young Man Is Gone.

Side 2: I'm So Young; Then I Kissed Her; Do You Wanna Dance; I Can Hear Music; Bluebirds Over The Mountain; I Was Made To Love Her; Cottonfields; Mountain Of Love; Devoted To You; Hushabye.

A truly bizarre compilation from the Orient, containing just about every decent cover 'the Boys' put to vinyl during the "Capitol Era". "Why Do Fools Fall In Love" is, unfortunately, the LP mix so we still have to wait for the brief snippet of vocal majesty which adorned the single mix to appear on CD. "Bluebirds", "Cottonfields" and "I Was Made To Love Her" follow suit.

What this compilation proves beyond doubt is Brian's undoubted ability to turn even the weakest of Spector songs ("I'm So Young", "Then I Kissed Her") into teenage works of art.

The booklet is a joy to behold, especially the previously unseen (at least by me) pics which adorn the centre pages. There's a lovely shot of Mike riding a little Honda across the stage in front of a bemused collection of Beach Boys and a truly touching pic of a very contented and confident Brian also sitting astride a bike signing autographs. If only things could have remained thus. The last shot is one of the Beach Boys minus Brian but including Bruce circa PET SOUNDS. There are five pages of notation - all in Japanese (NB for anyone interested I'm arranging at this very mo to have all the Jap CD liner notes translated - when I get them so will you!!). The final 20 or so pages are the lyrics in both English and Japanese and which are nearly all correct. The sound quality is superb throughout and "Sloop John B" in particular is so crystal clear as to sound remixed. As a curio this CD is priceless but for those of you in the shallows it's pretty much a wait-till-later purchase.

Available from Quickstep Records (09274 28832).

#### JAMES CROWTHER

-oOo-

As with, presumably, every Wilson watcher, I programmed my CD player to FLESH AND BLOOD in order to gauge the strength of Carnie's Rolling Stone interview. For those of you who missed it, her choice of language was 'basic' at best and referred to the 'inherent honesty' of the new songs.

Expecting "I'm bugged..." without the wit, I was pleasantly surprised to hear how far Carnie and Wendy have progressed as songwriters and equally how forgiving they are. As with all addicts, Brian's 'problem' has never been his fault, it's always been the fault of the band, or Landy, or Van Dyke - in fact anyone but the main man himself. Being the by-product of an addicted parent is an almost unbearable situation for a child and yet I'm never anything but amazed by the amount of chances an addict is given and how strong a child's love is in spite of his or her parent's indifference. The song features their, by now, stock block harmonies for which they are justly famous but to these ears they are already turning pedestrian. The field of vocal harmonies is limitless and yet the girls seem intent on taking the easy way out. Carnie's voice is everything Bruce said it could be and places her, without doubt, at the top of the female vocal tree. Her phrasing and execution are faultless and jar with Wendy's obvious difficulty with some of the timing. Wendy is undoubtedly wonderful to look at but sans a video to feast upon she's probably best left as a harmony singer.

To the album itself: (Is a CD an album? C. White says it is so I guess it must be.)

"I Hear You, Prelude" - a lovely multi-sampled passage and for once the girls are showing some signs of inspiration with their vocal arrangements. At 53 seconds it's far too short but is without doubt, their best work to date.

"It's Only Life" - a sort of cross twixt Prince, sans the genius, and Bon Jovi sans the class. Landou's left hand work on guitar is far too heavy handed, and the song is lost in a sub-metal dance melee. It's probably a huge potential hit and I hate it. What I can't understand is why a guy as great as Marlette would put his name to such an aberration.

"You Won't See Me Cry" - the first single from this album and is, therefore, familiar to us all. It's a lovely ballad highlighted by great vocals and Marc Russo's sax work. Jerry Hey's string arrangement rivals Brian's work on "Goodnight My Love" as the definitive example of perfect understatement.

"Give It Up" - ventures into Fleetwood Mac territory and is none too bad for all that. Again the only reservation I have is Wendy, she may be the one the camera loves best but she certainly isn't blessed with Carnie's or Chynna's gift of delivery. In spite of the lead vocal a great track with gentle shades of Madonna.

"This Doesn't Have To Be Love" - a rather turgid ballad redeemed entirely by Leland Sklar's superb bass playing and Carnie's beautiful vocal. I personally adore the vocals that come in on the word "love" and drift

into the middle eight. The only duff section is again Landau's guitar work. Why Ballard didn't use someone with the musical vocabulary of Robbie Krieger beats me, as the latter's flamenco styling would be far better suited to the girls than Landau's metal thrash.

"Where Are You" - Chynna's "Flesh & Blood" and the former statements also apply here. The song itself captures the mood of the Airplane's "Wooden Ships" and for reasons which escape me is my fave Wilson-Phillips song to date. For once even the guitars gel.

"Flesh & Blood" follows and the wisdom of putting two such heavy beasts together should be questioned.



1992 / 29237

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## WILSON PHILLIPS



"Don't Take Me Down" - aside from a sub-Beatle chorus, is one of those disturbing songs you forget whilst it's playing. Another undoubted US top 10 but utterly charmless. Bob Marlette is responsible for the song and he's obviously slipped of late. Although the "Don't take me down" line is very Byrds-like and redeems it somewhat.

"All The Way From New York" - another nice song ruined by some very slap happy left hand work by Messrs Landau and Lukathar only saved by some outstanding harmonies and a superb synth horn line on the tag. Chynna's lead vocal is faultless and for once the man with the sticks, in this case John Robinson, shows some imagination in his performance.

"Fueled For Houston" - starts with that back beat synonymous with all Mor light rock songs and never really recovers. Jerry Hey steps in to almost save the day again with another magnificent horn arrangement. Alongside "Don't Take Me Down" another sure fire US top 10, but not my cup of tea at all.

"Goodbye; Carmen" - alongside "Where Are You" is a standout track. A superb string arrangement again courtesy of Jerry Hey and an unexpected and exhilarating middle eight section turn a so-so ballad into something very special. Not a hit with the public en masse but a firm fave with all Wilson Watchers methinks.

"Alone" - a lovely bridge twixt 1st and 2nd projects; just light enough to retain the old fans and heavy enough in places to capture the new ones. There are lovely vocals throughout and yet to these ears there are sections calling out for more harmonies. Still a great track all round. And a great lead vocal from Wendy!!

"I Hear You Reprise" - a 2.06 extension of the opening track and shows what the girls are capable of. Wendy's piano playing echoes her father's webbed hand approach and it ranks alongside anything from Brian and/or the Boys since SUNFLOWER.

All in all it's a great second LP, a mite heavy in the guitar stakes but that's how things are these days.

JAMES CROWTHER



"How can we be like enemies, when we're only flesh and blood - what does it take to make your heart bleed - Daddy aren't we enough?"

Wilson Phillips use their new album SHADOWS AND LIGHT as an opportunity to give a message to their fathers. Carnie and Wendy in "Flesh And Blood" appropriately opened by the sound of waves and Chynna in "All The Way From New York", a thank you message for the belated parent her father has been. Both are equally sloppy but uncontrollably catchy.

The new album is obviously trying to be more upbeat than the successful debut album. And with songs such as "It's Only Life", "Give It Up", "Don't Take Me Down" and the rocky (well trying hard to be) "Fuelled For Houston" their efforts have been worthwhile and all four are very contagious.

Carnie comes tops in the lead vocals, especially in the melodious "This Doesn't Have To Be Love". All three take credit for "You Won't See Me Cry" which, unfortunately wasn't as successful as it should have been. Wendy takes written and vocal credit for "Alone" which starts off lovely, but unfortunately ends up being slightly dreary.

The melancholy lyrics of "Where Are You", a song about child abuse and the Spanish themed "Goodbye Carmen" help to make a contrast to the more livelier tracks.

The album is started with 53 seconds of beautiful harmony and finished with about 2 minutes of equal beauty in "I Hear You". Wilson Phillips prove that together they have something special in their voices and this is shown all the way through the album.

It remains to be seen whether their second album will be as successful as the first and produces as many hit singles.

GINA GRANT

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30th ANNIVERSARY POLL UPDATE

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Well, by the beginning of June approximately 3.5% of the STOMP subscribers had seen fit to mail their choices in - hardly a flood, but well within the usual response range. (However, we have a sneaking feeling that come the Convention we could be knee-deep in submissions...). Limiting readers to one choice has, inevitably produced some early log-jams, notably in the best/worst song category; conversely, the best album best solo set and fave BB are two-horse races, whilst in the worst solo, best cover and leave fave BB stakes, there's essentially one preference.

A word about the favourite/least favourite BB category; as with the rest of the poll, this is your person choice, not your critical opinion. Several readers have commented that we should retire this category as none are basically superior to any of the others; and quite rightly so. What we want to know is who you favour most and least, not who you'd die for and who you'd most like to see boiled in oil (slowly...). If in doubt, don't bother.

One final point - before you vote for any of the archive songs, please check to see if they are unreleased. Thanks.

-oOo-

ROCK / When Brian Wilson turned 50 last week, nobody noticed.

Except, perhaps, Paul McCartney. Giles Smith reports

# Good vibrations

IN APRIL 1967, Paul McCartney of The Beatles met Brian Wilson of The Beach Boys. It was pop's World Summit. The year before, in a conscious attempt to outdo The Beatles' *Rubber Soul* album, Wilson had written the extraordinary *Pet Sounds*, melodically and instrumentally the most ambitious pop album anyone had ever heard. And, though The Beatles parried with *Revolver*, it was The Beach Boys who topped the *New Musical Express* readers' poll for 1966.

So McCartney, in Denver for Jane Asher's 21st birthday, flew over to Los Angeles in Frank Sinatra's Lear jet. He wanted to find out what Wilson was planning next. And he found him in a studio, surrounded by vegetables.

"Vegetables" was the title of the song Wilson was tinkering with; he'd bought some to spread around him for inspiration. During a period of boredom, he had devised a game of billiards, using radishes and cherry tomatoes for balls and a celery stalk for a cue, but with McCartney there, he got on with finishing his vocals. Wilson completed the track at 2.00am, at which point McCartney sat at the piano and played him a song he had been working on - "She's Leaving Home". Wilson had a new song, too - "Heroes and Villains" - but he was too shy to play it. McCartney travelled back to London to prepare for the release of *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. Wilson went home, where, about a month afterwards, in the words of his autobiography, he "began to lose it".

Twenty-five years later, *Sgt Pepper* is back in the Top 20 while *Pet Sounds*, the record which helped define its scope, is, perhaps, somewhere in the back of your record collection. In 1990, when *Pet Sounds* was finally made available on CD, it crawled to No177 in the American charts and then crawled away again. It seems to have hit that strange air-pocket in which people agree to call something a classic, but never actually play it. Meanwhile, McCartney was 50 last Thursday, an occasion much-trumpeted, and with ample reason. But there were few radio tributes two days later, when Brian Wilson turned 50 and nobody noticed.

Wilson's autobiography is published in Britain this week - *Wouldn't It Be Nice: My Own Story*. It's certainly his own story - no one else has a story like this to tell - but the cover and the spine bear the words "with Todd Gold" (a writer for *People* magazine) and the text seems frequently to carry the sound of another's voice. Would the Beach Boy who narrowly survived death by drugs and obesity really turn to his closest companion near the narrative's end and say, so neatly, "When it comes to life and death, we've already earned our gold albums"? And surely Brian Wilson, of all people, would know the difference between a "reprise" and a "reprieve".

Then again, who can tell what Brian Wilson knows and doesn't know these days? When he

"lost it", he didn't just misplace it: he put it down somewhere where there was a serious danger he would never find it again. The cracks first showed publicly in 1964, when he started screaming on board a flight from LA to Houston at the start of a Beach Boys tour. During the next 18 months, he suffered three further nervous breakdowns.

The book locates the seeds of Wilson's collapse in his childhood, in the conduct of his father and one-time manager, Murry Wilson, who drove him hard, while telling him he was useless. Wilson is deaf in his right ear: "whether the deafness was a result of a birth defect or one of my dad's early beatings has been lost and buried among my family's many skeletons". If Wilson was especially recalcitrant, his father would remove his glass eye and force him to look into the empty socket.



The Beach Boys carried on touring. Wilson joined them infrequently, preferring to stay at home, writing their songs, recording their arrangements and getting stoned. He found himself ever more prey to berserk schemes and paranoid fantasies. Most berserk scheme: the giant indoor sandpit in which he situated his piano, in the hope that a childish naivety would seep into his playing. (The household animals found another use for the sand; odd to reflect that the best part of *Pet Sounds* was composed in a dog's lavatory.) And most paranoid fantasy: that Phil Spector, the record producer he idolised, was trying to bend his mind and throw him off course.

He'd leave money outside in the mail-box and a dealer would drive by and exchange it for a pouch of cocaine. As time went by, the dealer was stopping off daily. Wilson spent the 1970s "chronically high". Come the next decade, he was eating caramel sundaes for breakfast, staying in bed, not bathing. It's hard to shower when you believe snakes and blood are likely to pour from the faucet.

Some now claim that when Brian Wilson

"lost it", someone else came along and took it off for themselves. That someone was Dr Eugene Landy, "shrink to the stars", a kind of hardcore therapist who moves in with his patients, works on them 24 hours (price: \$200 per hour). He got results, as the photographs in the book show. There's Brian in 1982, weighing 25 stone, a baffled monster. There he is again in Hawaii with Landy, walking up hills, driving a car. And finally, there he is on his porch in Malibu, tugging away at a weights machine, cracking a stiff, lop-sided smile and looking fit. Wilson now runs six miles daily.

But Landy mixed business with therapy. He took over every aspect of Brian's life, including the financial one. He co-wrote and produced Wilson's 1988 comeback album. Last November, Wilson's family was ready to go to court to contest that Landy had brainwashed Wilson in an attempt to seize control of his estate. The case was postponed. Landy has pointed out that if Wilson had died, none of these questions would have arisen.

The family's lawyer claimed "the family want to make Brian a free man again", though the picture of the family provided by Wilson's autobiography suggests that its members too, have muddled motives in relation to him. The book says Landy could have sorted Wilson out in 1976, had the rest of the band not jumped at the earliest signs of his recovery and pushed him into touring and writing again. He became - in this version of events - little more than a song machine, a money-spinner. It's worth noting, though, that the book is dedicated to Dr Eugene Landy ("without you there'd be no music"), that Landy negotiated the publishing deal and that he stands to receive one third of any royalties it generates.

Little wonder, then, that you can lose sight of *Pet Sounds*. It is dwarfed by the story which follows it. If you play it, though, it looms up defiantly - from "Wouldn't It Be Nice" through "Don't Talk (Put Your Head on My Shoulder)" to "God Only Knows". Like *Sgt Pepper*, it's in rebellion against the band's prevailing public image - the candy-striped shirts, smooth chins and wind-cleaned hair familiar from the endless Greatest Hits compilations have little in common with this album's chief pang, which is melancholy. Timpanis canter in and out, but it is almost devoid of steady beats, preferring to wind its melodies round shifts of tempo which then lock together and hold. It shows what Wilson had over Spector - an ability to use the studio to contrive a sense of open space, which is distinct from a wall of sound. *Sgt Pepper* opened up pop's range of possible references. But it walked through a door which Brian Wilson had already left ajar. □ *Wouldn't It Be Nice: My Own Story* by Brian Wilson with Todd Gold is published by Bloomsbury, £17.99.

□ *Pet Sounds* is available as a CD on Capitol, CDP 7 48421 2.



# DON (WAS DON)

Usually the news that Dire Straits are playing a string of concerts at Earls Court would not raise even a glimmer of interest in me, but full page ads in the Evening Standard included a few words of note: "Plus Support Was (Not Was)".

In STOMP No 84 it was reported that Brian was working with Don Was. A short while after this "Friday Night At the Dome", a C4 "yoof" programme, ran an item on the unlikely phenomenon of Brian Wilson and Don Was together in the Studio. Along with all the usual stuff on Brian's past, Surf Squad etc., were two tantalizing segments of Brian at the piano singing "Love And Mercy" and "Brian". A cool looking guy with shades and distinctive hairstyle played accoustic bass: Don Was.

Don spoke more passionately about PET SOUNDS and Brian's achievements than anyone I've ever heard on TV or radio before. He rounded off his praises by saying "Brian is the Cezanne of Pop Music", not since Derek Taylor have such accolades been banded around. It seemed to me that Brian had here a real musical ally.

So who is Don Was? I remember "Walk The Dinosaur" and "Spy In The House Of Love" but other than that the name Was (Not Was) was on the periphery of my musical knowledge, but not anymore.

Once a name gets ingrained in your memory you start seeing it everywhere, and indeed Don Was seems to be everywhere. To make a long story short, the Was Brothers - Don (music) and David (lyrics) are originally from Detroit and emerged onto the music scene as "Was (Not Was)" in 1981, with their invention "Mutant Disco". Not until their third album in 1987 did they make any impression in the UK. Don has become one of the hottest producers around, working with Bob Dylan, The B52's, Bonnie Raitt, Iggy Pop, Elton John, Willie Nelson, the list of names goes on.

So it is with much gratitude to the Was's record company, and to Don, that Mike and I are able to relate to you the following conversation, which was almost a half hour monologue on the state of Brian Wilson and the prospects for the future. This took place on Friday 5th June 1992 backstage at Earls Court before Was (Not Was) played their support slot. We hardly had to ask questions as Don spoke easily, very warmly and enthusiastically about the man we all admire.

**NICK GUY** The first we knew about you working with Brian was when we saw the two of you together on "Friday Night At The Dome", so the first question has to be, how did you get together? Was it your impetus, or did Brian phone you up?

**DON WAS** To tell you the truth, it was probably Landy's impetus. I was working with The Knack - remember them? - and they're Brian fanatics. I'd always dug Brian's work, but I hadn't listened to it much in years. Then they turned me onto the SMILE boot-legs: I hadn't heard that stuff before, and it was right around the time the PET SOUNDS CD came out, so I got that too... and that was when I realised that he was the greatest of them all. I was so bowled over by what he had done - if it came out yesterday, it would be amazing, but the fact that he did it twenty five, thirty years ago is staggering. He had no role models, he had no-one to even steal it from - he just

invented this impressionism in rock & roll music. So I stopped listening to everything: I was just playing SMILE - what I had of it - and I was totally immersed in this stuff for about a month and a half. Then I went to a party for the release of this album RED, HOT & BLUE, and he was behind me in a line, getting food, and it was like, "Arrggh, that's him!!!" Normally, I'll talk to anybody, especially at a party, but I couldn't even go up to him, then I met someone from Capitol Records who knew him, that I knew, and he introduced us. He had no idea who I was or what I'd done, but we got talking, and he invited me to come hear SWEET INSANITY, which I later found out was his standard procedure: he wanted outside opinions, so he'd been bringing all kinds of people over to listen to it. I think Gene Landy knew who I was, and he thought, this is someone who can help Brian, so he pushed me to come and listen. I didn't take much coaxing! And... I saw him periodically for about a year, and as things unfolded with SWEET INSANITY, and it became clear that Warner Brothers wasn't gonna put it out...

**NG** Was it easy to listen to?

**DW** I don't think it represents... What was good about it was that, once you got under the surface of the record, it was clear that Brian had his musical chops together. You knew that he could make a record, that he could arrange, and that he had good musical ideas.

**NG** Was it difficult listening to it with him?

**DW** Oh yeah, really awkward, because truthfully, I didn't like the songs. There were certain things that had good hooks to them.

**MIKE GRANT** He was looking for a reaction from you.

**DW** Yeah, and I'm sitting there, debating. I thought, well, I'll tell him the truth and he's gonna be pissed off - but a year from now, he's gonna remember I was the only one who sat here and told him the truth. So I told him the truth. Without being brutal. My feeling about SWEET INSANITY is that it's well crafted, and shows that his musical chops are there, but it's kinda lazy on the songwriting end. Brian is someone that I expect to do unusual things. I expect him to go to unlikely chords. As I started playing gigs with him, I started charting out certain songs like "This Whole World", and "This Whole World" is not in any key! The chords keep moving around, yet it's got this simple melody and it's a real art-form to be able to do that. It's not like "'Til I Die" - that goes to the nuttiest place, but it comes back, perfectly. So, I felt that, musically he was going to some fairly obvious places, with no risk involved, and it was too... it wasn't hip enough for him.

**MG**

Did it sound unfinished?

**DW**

It sounded like there was maybe too much stuff on there. He did a lot of overdubs, and these weren't mixed, so he hadn't sorted through what to use. And... I felt that he wasn't singing right, either, I felt he was over singing. He shouts, or he was trying to croon. I know he studied with a guy named Gary Cottona, who helped him get his vocal chops together, but I think that sometimes he feels compelled to sing too well, and his best vocals were the close, soft, simple vocals. Those (on SWEET INSANITY) may have humanity to them, but they may not be the best display of his vocal prowess... But I told him this stuff, and the rap record, I told him it was beneath him. I said, you're supposed to be an innovator, you're not supposed to be reflecting what some guys are doing, and getting it wrong besides. It was a little uncomfortable, and I don't



even know to this day if he still has the feeling, 'Don's already told me the truth'. I think he still likes the record. Anyway, that's how I met him, and then I started playing some gigs with him, little one-off things like the China Club, for which he had a big band, and then there were other things that were just me and him, right around the time we did that TV show, a benefit for paediatric AIDS where we did three songs, "Good Vibrations", "Help Me Rhonda" and "Love & Mercy". The first two were almost perfunctory performances: it's always fun to play those songs with Brian Wilson, but they were like throw-aways. "Love & Mercy", something clicked with him. We were outside and he said he saw God coming up over the mountains, and let me tell you something, he was transported. It was one of the most chilling things I ever saw happen live, because he just got so deep inside the song, and so at one with this piece of music that it was a phenomenal performance. I almost put the bass down, I was like, what got into you, man? We talked about it afterwards, and all I could think was all the negative publicity, all the court stuff... if people could only see this side of him. I don't know that anybody can hit that thing all the time. Even the best performers have learned to go through the motions: if you're gonna give a show every night for a year and a half. Mark Knopfler has got it down - he could do the show in his sleep... but to hit that deep inspiration...

MG Did anything ever happen with Carole King?

DW Yeah, that's still going on. We never finished the song, but we're all back together again. Carole King, Rob Wasserman, Brian and myself. I'd like to get Brian hooked up with Paul Brady too... he's maybe the best songwriter on earth.

MG Are you going to rescue any of the SWEET INSANITY songs?

DW Well, I don't know... there are some nice bits, but hopefully Brian will write ten better songs.

MG We've also heard about a remake of "Proud Mary".

DW Sure. About two months ago, I was working at a studio called Oceanway, which used to be United Western, where he did all his records, and if you look at the PET SOUNDS CD booklet, it looks exactly the same, except that they've updated the console and the equipment, but the room is the same, so it's always weird when he comes in there. That's part of the mystique - people work there because of the vibe that he did all those records there. Anyway, he had this idea in his head, so he came in the studio when I was working with Felix Cavalleri - I started this record label and I signed Felix and Brian - and said, look, I hear the whole arrangement in my head, I want you to get a drummer, two bass players, two guitar players and two keyboard players, and I need guys who can read charts, I'm gonna write charts up. I still hadn't worked with him in the studio, so I thought that this was a fantastic test - now we're gonna see if he can still do this. It's probably the first time he's recorded like this, live guys with charts in a long, long time. So we went into United Western studio 2, and there were about five minutes that were a little hairy, whilst we were trying to sort the charts out, at which point I believe if Mike Love had been there, he would've said, ah you \*\*\*\*\* get outa here, I'm taking over the session, and that would've been the end of it. It was a great band. Jeff Porcaro was the drummer, Jerry Scheff was one of the bass players, with Hutch Hutchison who plays with Bonnie Raitt... Mark Goldenburg and Michael Landau who are two great session guitarists. In the end Brian played the tack piano and, Geoff Lee, who works with Brian, played acoustic, and once we sorted out a few

discrepancies in the charts, he was completely focussed, loose, with it, telling jokes. I've never seen him so relaxed, and it was great: we cut a really good track, he did a rough vocal and he sang with himself, just sitting in the room, singing in the beautiful voice that's on "Caroline No". I don't think it's the final vocal, but it showed me. There are things in the arrangement, like 32 bars of hi-hat only, he said just leave the spacing. That's a painfully long time for a band to sit there with just a hi-hat ticking, and that got us sorta looking at each other thinking 'I don't know...', but when he sat down and overdubbed the B3 (Hammond Organ) and started filling in the spaces - which I should add he does in about one take; he hears it all, he knows what he wants to play, he sits down and he does it - as he started filling the spaces, it dawned on me that the way he did "Good Vibrations", with all the edits, and the way he used to be at that point where he was cutting 45-second segments and trying to piece the puzzle together, he now did it in advance, so there are things that sound like edits in there, but they're not. He heard it and he knew when to shift from, like a full choir to a jew's harp and an organ, and he heard all these textures, and we did more overdubs, about a week ago. I'm totally convinced that all he's got to do is write ten songs as great as PET SOUNDS and he could make that in his sleep tomorrow. Whatever troubles he's had in his life, they don't enter into the musical arena, and no matter how uncomfortable he may be at a dinner, he's at home in the studio. He's a different guy: he's so relaxed, it's really gratifying, it's really something. And there are a lot of people like that...

MG Are you producing, or co-producing?

DW I guess you'd call it co-producing.

MG Does "Proud Mary" have single potential at the moment?

DW It's a good record, it's got all the elements, but to tell you the truth, I don't think in terms of hit singles. I want to make an album that doesn't require a hit single, because when you listen to the radio today, there's not a whole lot that sounds like Brian Wilson. Pop radio's in a kind of sick state, full of dance music, and I don't think Brian should have to condescend to get on the radio, so I'm not after that. The records that I've had that have been hit singles, almost without exception, were things that weren't aimed at the radio, but that we tried to make a great record, like Bonnie Raitt. "I Can't Make You Love Me" was a number six single in America, and it's got nothing to do with anything else you'd hear on the radio - it's just a great song with a terrific vocal performance, so really that's my outlook with Brian. Don't worry about the radio, don't worry about the singles, just make a good record and assume that there are enough people out there who like the sound of Brian Wilson so that it'll at least... doesn't have to sell two million copies - let it make it's money back. I'm not looking to make a fortune out of this: if I can make a great record, and not lose money - great!

NG Is there any sort of rough plan to what you're doing?

MG We know about the concert idea.

DW It's going to be a movie that's closer to "Don't Look Back", a documentary, a hand-held black & white kinda thing, and as opposed to staging a kinda static concert, we're going to concentrate more on the rehearsals leading up to the concert, film them in different situations, just be out and about for the month preceding - I think it's more interesting. But, during the course of this film, we'll capture him performing ten songs. Elton John's already committed to it... Ringo, David Crosby...

MG And these are the more unusual songs, like "Caroline No"...

DW "This Whole World" is one of them..., "'Til I Die", Caroline No", - the movie's called "I Just Wasn't Made For These Times" - "Love & Mercy", "Meant For You"...

MG Any of the SWEET INSANITY stuff?

DW Probably not any of that stuff, but there will probably be at least one new song. We're gonna do "Wonderful", "Cabin Essence"... there's one other... "Melt Away", that's it. So, those'll probably be the songs, and there may only be one scene from the actual concert. The idea is to hopefully have a cable TV special and a video tape of the film, and a soundtrack album, and that would be his next album, and as we're doing that we're gonna start develop a new track. I think he works best on one song at a time so rather than have a session where we cut ten basic tracks, we'll record and finish a song, like we did with "Proud Mary". While I'm gone, he's writing songs with a band called Jellyfish. We went over the studio for Brian to meet them, and Brian said, "Jesus, it looks like a cartoon in here" because it's all these nutty keyboards with psychedelic things painted all over them, and they played us two tracks that sounded like they're right off the SMILE album, banjos and the whole bit, and it was so Brian that it was pretty weird. I think they're going to be great from him. They love him so much, and the great thing is, there are all these different collaborators who just love him, who've been so influenced by him and understand the greatness of his work.

MG When do you see this project coming off?

DW We're hoping to film it in September. I think it'll take about two months to make the film. The concert... I don't think we'll sell tickets, we'll just do something intimate like the Roxy, with an invited audience, and we'll record that too, and maybe that'll be the best thing on the album, but I'm starting to think that just getting a more spontaneous thing, a looser thing and being in a couple of different settings, auditioning musicians, I think it'll be more interesting.

MG Has Brian officially signed with your label?

DW It may be official this week. Everything was very, very close. He's definitely out of the Sire contract. The agreement was just about done - there's one last thing that was hanging it up that should be... it'll certainly be signed while I'm over here.

MG Is he signed for one album, two?

DW I don't know. I don't get involved with all that. There are people who do that stuff: he's got his lawyer, I got my partners and there's the MCA people involved. I just want to get on with the album.

MG Have you got involved with the other Beach Boys at all?

DW I'd met Bruce - he called me on the 'phone about something... something he dug that Was (Not Was) had done. I was really honoured to talk to him, and it was before I knew the story of the division among the Beach Boys. He was very nice and he seemed pretty much an impartial character in the play.

MG Has Brian got any contact with Carl now?

DW He's seen him a couple of times... but just because Brian doesn't tell me something doesn't mean it's not happening. To say that Carl's taking care of him would be strong... but I'm not involved with that side. I'm just there for the music. Obviously I care what happens to Brian; he's a very sweet man

and if he needed any help from me personally, I'd be there for him, but I don't think that's why I got dropped in the middle of his life. I think he just needs someone to help him realise that he's got all his powers. I think he's got less confidence in himself than I've got.

MG But is he getting more confident?

DW Oh yeah, these primary sessions have been fantastic. He's just a humble guy. I don't think he's got a mean bone in his body: he's a pure, honest, nice guy.

MG What did you think of his first album, because it was pretty top-heavy with names and credits?

DW Did you buy or hear it at the time, or pick up on it later?

DW No, I bought it at the time because I heard "Love & Mercy" on the radio when I was working with the B-52s at Woodstock, and I felt it was a great song. As for the album, there are moments I like more than other moments. "Melt Away" is an incredible song, and I like the Jeff Lynne song.

MG Does Kevin Leslie still work for Brian now?

DW Mm-hm, he works for him. Kevin's still around.

MG And is the Brains & Genius office still open?

DW He's still got the studio there, but it's all considerably scaled down. It's a transitional time. In the end, he's gonna have to get a manager for himself. It's the next phase - the important thing now is to get the creative work done. He doesn't really need a manager right now. Kevin does most of the things that a manager would do, but I don't know that he's got the experience to deal with a record company, but at the moment it's not an issue.

MG Do you have any opinion about Landy?

DW I'm not a detractor of Landy. I think he overstepped the boundaries as a doctor, legally. You can't do that. It was a stupid thing to do and I think he should have ended that side of things. I think he was a good manager for Brian, he had Brian's interests at heart. People find him aggressive, but he's no more aggressive than any other manager, he's just more aggressive than you'd expect a psychologist to be, and he's aggressive on Brian's behalf. I've heard all the weird stories, all the Russ Titleman stuff, but the fact of the matter is that all he's ever said to me was, "you do what you want in the studio, I'm not part of that! Just make a good record for Brian." He's just been helpful, and I've got nothing bad to say about him from my own personal experience. I can't confirm whether all the other stories are true or not. I know that the running line of commentary is that he's got some Svengali-like power over Brian... Well, I don't see that at all. Gene, as far as I can tell, never forced himself on Brian as a songwriter. Brian's with it: he can make decisions. He chose, at that point, to write songs with Gene because he's comfortable with Gene. It was as simple as that, and he's capable of making any decision he wants, including saying, "I'd like to go write with Elvis Costello".

MG Are you working on arranging all the songs he's gonna do?

DW He's one of the great arrangers of all time, so it's not necessary for me to do any of that unless he wants some help. We'll probably work with this guy names David Campbell who's a really terrific string arranger who does a lot of Peter Asher's stuff, worked with Linda Ronstadt, on Bonnie's record, and he's really deep into Brian. Someone who can work as an



orchestrator, who can sit down with Brian, get feedback on what he'd like to change about the records. Some of Brian's songs... "Wendy" for example, which comes off as a snappy song and has this deep layer of pathos, once you get under the surface, which I think is more fitting for a 50-year old man than some chirpy little teenage song. It's built into the songs, and in these new arrangements, that's something I'd like to stress. I'm thinking of the guy in Des Moines, Iowa, who's never read any of the books, doesn't know the difference between Mike and Brian, knows the surfing songs but not PET SOUNDS and certainly not SMILE, never heard "'Til I Die" - I want those people to understand the depth of his work, and that's really the point of the film, so I tried not to choose those songs to begin with. There are no surfin' songs.

MG What about "Surf's Up"?

DW Maybe... maybe. I'd like to go with some of the lesser known things: those ten songs I told you about, you put that out and it's as good as putting out a new album because the bulk of people probably don't know those songs. During the course of the movie, I want to explain a little bit about how things seem so deceptively simple that people may not realise how revolutionary it all was.

MG Will there be interviews with people talking about Brian?

DW Yeah, but not like talking heads in front of the camera but if Elton John's sitting at a piano, talking with someone else about it, I may try to include that.

MG Are you directing the movie?

DW Yeah, I'm the director. I went to Yosemite last year, right after the paediatric AIDS concert, and I was thinking, boy, I wish people could see it, I don't think a concert tour's gonna get it across, and then the film idea just came to me in a flash.

MG You mentioned a concert tour - does Brian ever think of going out on the road, playing proper concerts?

DW I think so. It really depends what he's happy doing. I want him to be happy. If he's happy playing shows, then he should go out and do it. He's certainly capable of doing it, no doubt in my mind. I've done enough shows with him to know he can do anything he wants. The image that people have of him is nuts - it's not correct. Obviously he hurt himself, and he has problems, but he's... that conservatorship thing's bullshit, that's all I can say. I can name ten people as famous as Brian who need a conservator more than him.

MG Is Michael Bernard still around?

DW Yeah, he's around, but I haven't used him on this record. Brian's real comfortable with him, so I'm sure we'll get around to using him. At the moment I'm trying to get Brian out of his other patterns, not that there's anything wrong with them. I just want him to try new stuff, start fresh, come up with newer things. There's no need to repeat things. Stay inspired, work with new musicians, absorb some new things.

NG

It all sounds very hopeful, especially after the past two years or so.

DW

I'm telling you, I expect his best work to be ahead of him, and I'm not bullshitting. I see no reason why not. I make six to eight albums a year, and I don't see anything different about Brian's situation to anyone else. Everyone takes a year to gather material. I've seen him do background, seen him do vocals, seen him come in with arrangements - he's totally with it, so there's no reason for this not to happen.

-o0o-

Interview by Michael Grant & Nicholas Guy for Beach Boys Stomp.  
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Don Was Photo by Nick Guy.

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Here, as promised, the itinerary for the Four Freshmen visit, touring with Ray McVay's U.K. All-Star Big Band.

Dates and venues (so far) are as follows:

Thu 5th Nov.	Symphony Hall	Birmingham
Fri 6th "	Arts Centre	Poole
Sat 7th "	Royal Festival Hall	London
Sun 8th "	Davenport Theatre	Stockport
Thu 12th Nov.	Civic Hall	Hemel-Hempstead
Fri 13th "	Fairfield Halls	Croydon
Sat 14th "	Apollo Theatre	Oxford
Sun 15th "	Apollo Theatre	Bristol

'YES' The Four Freshmen are to visit the UK more details next issue.

BEACH	BOYS	U.S.	TOUR	DATES
Aug 3			Toronto, Ont (Kingswood)	
Aug 11			Traverse, MI	
Aug 16			Milwaukee, WI	
Aug 18			Springfield, IL	
Aug 25			Ottawa, Ont	
Aug 26-27, 29			Saratoga, NY (Performing Arts)	
Aug 28-29			Jones Beach, NY	
Aug 30			Nashua, NY	
Sept 2			Allentown, PA	
Sept 3			Essex Junction, VT	
Sept 4			Syracuse, NY	
Sept 5			Detroit, MI (Pine Knob)	
Sept 6			Mineapolis, MN	

In 1976 it was three years, in 1985 it was five and now in 1992 it's been seven. Years since a new, original, Beach Boys album that is, and could yet be longer for, although the band have a new set ready for release the small matter of a recording contract is notable by it's (current) absence... but with a little luck, come mid-summer, **SUMMER IN PARADISE** - produced by Terry Melcher, artwork by Dean Torrance - could be gracing our CD players. The full track listing is:

Hot Fun In The Summer Time (old Sly & The Family Stone track)  
Island Fever (first reported some three years ago)  
Summer Of Love (see last issue's news)  
Under The Boardwalk (Drifters oldie)  
Strange Things Happen.  
Surfin' (yep, that one, possibly a bluesy remake...)  
Goodbye To Lahaina  
Summer In Paradise  
Remember (Walkin' In The Sand) (Shangri-las' oldie)  
Still Surfin'  
Lost Summer Night or One Summer Night.

This track listing not yet confirmed.

The band have, in recent concerts, been performing "Hot Fun..." and a bluesy version of "Surfin'" to a mixed reaction, and also found time to fly down to Rio de Janeiro to support the alternative Earth Summit parallelling the official (and largely pointless) conference.

Brian, meantime, has been in the studio of late; for further details of this and other current BW-related matters, consult the Don Was interview elsewhere in this issue. A surprise media sighting for Brian was during the UK TV special celebrating the 25th Anniversary of SGT PEPPERS LONELY HEARTS CLUB BAND, aired 14th June. He looked and sounded pretty good, even if his hair was a slightly alarming shade of ginger (an excess of Grecian 2000?). If Don Was is anywhere near the truth, expect BW product sometime this autumn. On a slightly less musical front, it transpires that Brian's suit to recover his song copyrights has been settled out of court, with Brian receiving a payment of \$10,000,000. However, it's unclear if this is a one-off payment, or if he's also getting royalties as from now. Clarification when we find it...

The Honeys' Capitol compilation CD has been released at last (see review elsewhere), whilst the second Wilson Phillips album, SHADOWS AND LIGHT, has also seen the light of day on both sides of the Atlantic. The first 'single' from the album, "You Won't See Me Cry", hasn't thus far been quite such a success as those from the first set, reaching only the mid-20s.

Due to the length of the Don Was interview, part 3 of the Stomp discography has been heldover until the next issue.

The 3 LP set of 'SMILE' has arrived at Stomp but too late to review in this issue.

'Hot Fun In The Summertime' is the new US single which should be out as you you read this. The 'Summer In Paradise' Album should be out in the USA in early August, on the BROTHER label. The video for 'Hot Fun...' was directed by John Stamos.



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